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March 12, 2012

Assembly Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

Assembly Bill 674

I would like to thank the members of this committee for meeting on such short notice. I know that time is extremely short, but the Governor's office has made it clear to my office that AB 674 and its companion, SB 550 are priorities that they would like to see pass this session.

Since the beginning of the 2011-2012 legislative session, my staff and I have worked with Jim Rickel, the quality of life liaison for the Midwest region under the U.S. Department of Defense's state liaison office, on issues that affect the quality of life of service members and their families. One of the Department's priorities going into 2012 was easing the transition of military spouses from one state to another if they follow the service members on active duty. This transition can be difficult for a number of reasons – personal and professional – but AB 674 focuses on cases where the spouse holds a professional or occupational license. A license issued by one state may or may not be accepted in another state.

AB 674 is based primarily on a Florida statute Mr. Rickel shared with my office that requires the state to issue temporary licenses to a military spouses who has a valid out-of-state licenses, provided the spouse meets certain conditions. These temporary licenses are valid for six months. AB 674 adopts a similar system.

As my office reviewed the Florida law, we noticed that Florida also allows service members and military spouses who hold licenses to remain in good standing while the service members are on active duty. Florida law allows a six-month grace period upon a license holder's discharge from active duty. Wisconsin already has a provision along those lines for service members (321.60), with a 90-day grace period, but it does not have similar language in place for spouses. AB 674 expands section 321.60 to cover military spouses, and it doubles the grace period to 180 days.

Although this is an issue that my office has been working on for several months, my office only recently learned that the Governor's office has made this proposal a priority. My staff had shared an earlier draft with DSPS earlier this year, but DSPS recently took a second look at the bill and concluded that only minor changes were necessary, and those changes are included in AB 674.

The Senate Committee on Economic Development and Military Affairs held a hearing on SB 550 last Thursday, and it voted 7-0 to approve it last Friday. It is my hope that AB 674 will receive similar support in this committee.

Thank you again for your flexibility and for all the work that each of you has done this year to improve the lives of veterans, current service members, and their families.